Digital Melody

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Digital Melody

by Littlewonder_star

Summary

After a hard day and struggling to sleep, a weary Pomni decides to go for a midnight stroll. Surprisingly, she finds herself following some mysterious music and the even more peculiar company behind it.

Notes

I loved imagining the piano song playing while writing this—I pictured either "City of Stars" from La La Land. If you get a chance, look them up! The piano renditions are just beautiful and capture the essence of the characters perfectly. Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

Audience of One

It was another restless night at the so-called Amazing Digital Circus. However, it is anything but "Amazing." Pomni has been trapped in this h#@$hole for who knows how long, and she still can't get a decent night's sleep to hold her over until the next adventure.

Laying in her room, which serves as another reminder of being imprisoned in the body of a jester, she feels the weight of her situation. The place is filled with too many bright primary colors and ghastly childish items that are far too old for a 25-year-old. If she could even call herself an adult anymore, especially after being forced to deal with censorship that even alters her cursing. Days like these make everything she sees feel like it's mocking her—a constant reminder of her new reality.

Okay, this had to stop. The more she thought about her impending doom, the more it led her to spiral or, even worse, end up like Kafmo... no, not tonight at least. Pomni had to get her mind off things.

Maybe a late-night stroll could clear her head. She hadn’t done that in a while. Normally, she could distract herself by reading or counting the stripes in her room to bore herself to sleep, but today she felt restless.

Kicking off the covers, Pomni stood up, almost tripping over them, and found herself in the center of the room. It was pitch black; the lights wouldn’t come on for a few hours. So, she decided to grope around in the dark until she found a lamp.

After a few tries and knocking over various knickknacks, she finally found the cord and pulled it. Light flooded a small corner of the room, and she started searching for something that could help her so she wouldn’t get too lost in the darkness at night. Who knew what was lurking about?

After looking for a few minutes, the only kind of light she could find was a few glow sticks. Not much, but it would have to do. Cracking them and making two bracelets and a necklace, she was ready to go. Pomni approached her door and opened it gently, trying to remain quiet.

Pomni poked her head out, and she almost jumped out of her skin when she came face to face with none other than Jax... well, the portrait of himself on the door. Even when he wasn’t physically there, he could still scare the living s@#! out of her.

After calming her pounding heartbeat, she moved into the hallway and headed toward the kitchen.

She walked at a slow pace in the silent darkness of the circus. The glow sticks she was wearing provided little visibility, and she nearly tripped over one of the chairs by the dining table.

As she continued her stroll, Pomni's mind began to wander, particularly to a certain purple pain in the a$$.

Today had been rough; for some reason, he had been targeting Pomni much more with his antics. For example, during their poolside adventure this morning, he relentlessly stalked her, shouting "boo" at every corner and almost causing multiple panic attacks. Each time they encountered open water, he would shove her in, leaving her feeling like a sad, wet cat.

The more she yelled at him, the more he laughed in her face! What was wrong with this guy?! It was as if he had no sense of decency at all! He constantly pointed out how frazzled she was, telling her to "chill out" or trying to drag her along to mess with the other players.

How could she not be frazzled?! This place felt like a living nightmare, and she was stuck! What if she never got out?! What if she had a family looking for her? What if she turned into a blob of eyeballs and lost her sense of self altogether? What kind of life was it to survive in this digital landscape? Pomni's eyes felt like they were turning into scribbles, and her head was spinning.

The more she let her mind wander, the more sick and trapped she felt. By now, Pomni was in the kitchen, staring at the refrigerator. It was plain white, like the endless void she wandered into the first day she got here. This world felt empty; she was just another fake fragment in an AI.....

Wait..... what was that sound?

After hearing the noise, Pomni blinked hard, and her eyes began to return to normal after her mini-spiral. She turned her head to look into the darkness of the circus beyond the kitchen. Maybe she had imagined hearing something?

She glanced back at the fridge, but then she heard it again. It was faint, but something was playing. Curiosity got the better of her, and she moved away from the kitchen and back into the dining area.

Pomni stopped in the middle of the room she hitched her breath and listened.

There it was again.

Without fully comprehending what she was doing, Pomni started to walk toward the sounds. As she walked, the noise transformed into a melody.

It was music.

Distinct from the annoying upbeat intro typically associated with the circus; this was actual music.

Pomni continued to walk toward the sounds, which seemed to lead her in the direction of the main stage.

The music appeared to put her in a trance, causing the digital world around her to fade away. For the first time in a long while, she felt at ease. The longer she followed the sound, the more it felt as if she were floating.

Eventually, she came upon a door behind the main stage that she didn’t recall seeing before. Her glow sticks illuminated the area, their light swaying in rhythm with the music playing. Curious, she put her ear to the door to listen.

The melody was different; it was gentle as if the musician was nervous at first but then became more confident. As she listened longer, Pomni realized that the song was being played on a piano. Did the circus have a piano? What captivated Pomni, however, was the emotion the music stirred within her.

This song felt like a message. It was somber as if the person playing it was crying on the inside while still managing to smile. The longer she listened he felt something she hasn't felt in a long time, hope. Pomni tightened her lip and hugged her arms close to herself; this song felt profoundly human.

Tears began to well up in her eyes; it had been so long since she felt her digital heart skip a beat. The music was so lonely as if it were saying that it understood her.

Curiosity got the best of her at this point, she needed to know who or what was behind this song. She needed more.

Carefully, Pomni reached toward the doorknob and slowly opened it a crack to peek through. To her surprise, the room was pitch black and empty. The only thing that was illuminated was the classic grand piano in the center of the room. And what shocked her was the person at the piano, a face she was all too familiar with.

Opening the door a bit wider, she stepped inside the room; the glow sticks illuminated her way, as well as her echoing footsteps. The music kept playing, the song still entranced her. Soon, she was right behind the piano and the man, or she should say rabbit, playing it.

"Jax?"

The piano fell silent as Jax lifted his fingers off the keys, shocked into stillness. Normally, he would respond with some snarky comment, but the silence between them seemed to stretch on. About a minute passed before Pomni repeated her question.

"Jax is that you?"

"What are you doing here?" he snapped back in a harsh tone.

He responded without looking at her, his back straightening fully while his ears pinned upright. To put it simply, he felt caught.

With the music playing, Pomni's presence had felt welcome but strained; now it was as if she had walked in on him completely exposed.

Pomni didn’t answer; she stood there, dumbfounded, as the tension in the air between them grew heavier.

"I said, what are you doing here?" Jax repeated, his voice raised and dripping with annoyance.

He turned to face her, the spell his song had cast over her broken. His Cheshire smile had vanished, replaced by a sharp glare. In short, he looked pissed.

Pomni stuttered nervously, knowing she had to tread lightly. "I—I couldn't sleep, so I decided to take a walk. I heard music playing and followed it..."

A heavy pause lingered between them for a few seconds, making Pomni feel increasingly awkward.

Jax just stared at her, his intense gaze piercing into her soul. His fists were clenched on his legs as he sat on the piano bench.

Pomni felt terrified; Jax was as dangerous as he was unpredictable. What would he do to her? Slam the piano lid on her fingers? Punt her out of the room like a football? Or worse, scheme something that would leave her anxious for months, never knowing what kind of punishment awaited her.

Taking a deep breath to avoid spiraling again, she tried to create a distraction for herself and whatever Jax was planning. Pomni began to ramble about small talk, unable to meet his intense gaze as her heart pounded in her ears.

"So, yeah, that song was really good! And, uh, I didn't know the circus had a piano, or this secret room behind the stage...uh, anyway, I didn't know you could play! Uh, how long—"

"Shut it," Jax spat out. Pomni stopped rambling.

"This stays between us; don’t you dare tell the others." Jax was looking Pomni directly in the eyes. His gaze was sharp and serious, his smile completely gone, but there was something different about his eyes. They were almost pleading with her.

Pomni felt a lump form in her throat. Just from his expression, she could tell that he didn’t want this spreading around the circus. Having known Jax for a few months, she could make an educated guess about why he wanted to keep his secret hidden.

It would change how others perceived him.

Jax seemed to go out of his way to ensure that the other players either hated him or feared him. She suspected that revealing his hobby would make them think he was soft. Although she wasn’t entirely sure why he cared so much, she knew that the Rabbit had quite the ego.

Before she could reply, he said almost in a whisper, "Did you like it?"

Taken aback, Pomni replied, "Huh?"

Speaking more forcefully, but still sounding annoyed, Jax asked, "The song?"

Still startled by the entire encounter, Pomni paused to gather her thoughts. The music was beautiful—downright lovely—but why did he want her opinion? After a moment of silence, she responded to Jax in a small voice, still avoiding his gaze.

"Yes, it was beautiful and somber at the same time. I may not know much about music, but it's the most realistic piece I've heard since coming to the circus."

Pausing to think, Pomni felt her digital heartbeat. The music resonated with her; it brought her comfort, and surprisingly, so did the Rabbit playing the piece.

Pomni took a breath and looked Jax in the eye. "It makes me feel understood. It makes me feel human."

Jax's frown began to twitch, and his eyes widened slightly in surprise, taken aback by her sudden declaration. However, the moment passed quickly. Looking away from Pomni, he shook his head, sighed and reverted to his classic smug smile.

"Jeez, kid... no need to get all sappy; it’s just a song. Feel free to stay or leave; I don’t care—just let me practice."

Without another word, Jax turned back around and began to play the piano again.

Silently, he shifted his body to make some room on the piano bench he was sitting on while he played.

At that moment, Pomni didn't know how to react; Jax didn’t want to kick her out. Was this an invitation? Why was he letting her stay?

Pomni stammered, "Are you sure—"

Jax, acting annoyed, cut her off. "Sit or scram, and no talking."

With that, Pomni fell silent. She glanced at the piano bench and hesitantly sat down next to Jax. Not knowing where to look, she decided to focus on his hands.

The way he played was so gentle and articulate, as if years of muscle memory were embedded in his fingers. How could someone who caused so much destruction treat something so delicately?

Occasionally, she sneaked glances at Jax's face while watching him play. Although he wore his everyday smile, it felt different. He seemed at ease, even relieved. His shoulders weren't hunched, and his body was no longer stiff. Once Pomni joined him, it was as if he let go of whatever was weighing on him.

Pomni decided to stop analyzing Jax and just focus on his music. She closed her eyes and felt herself transported to somewhere far, far away from the circus.

After being filled with worries and anxious thoughts, her mind seemed to vanish. It was as if she were sitting in a quiet green meadow at night, with a soft breeze fluttering through her hair. She felt... peace.

While Pomni was in her meditative state, Jax's eyes wandered over to her. They softened as he observed her becoming lost in his music.

It was nice to feel heard.

Surprising himself with these thoughts, he shook his head, stiffened his shoulders, and stopped playing the piano. His heart skipped a beat.

He turned his body to check if Pomni noticed, but she had fallen asleep, leaning on his shoulder. A bit surprised by the contact, Jax shifted uncomfortably but soon grew accustomed to it.

Not wanting to disturb her, he played another song or two until it turned into the early hours of the morning.

He didn't want to be caught by the other residents of the circus, so Jax stopped playing and turned to look at the sleeping Pomni. With a smirk, he poked her side until she began to stir. Pomni woke with a start.

"HUH?! Where am I?"

Then it hit her: she had fallen asleep while leaning on Jax!? How embarrassing! Before she could apologize, Jax interrupted her babbling.

"Jeez, you spaz! Wanna wake up the whole circus?! Anyway, you better scram before the others wake up. I don't want questions."

Before Pomni could reply, Jax simply stretched his tall form and arms, feeling sore after Pomni had laid on him in an awkward position.

Saying nothing, he closed the piano lid and walked out of the hidden room, leaving Pomni frazzled and confused.

Pomni watched Jax walk through the door, but she remained glued to the piano bench.

Her eyes drifted to the closed piano, and with her gloved hand, she touched it, reminiscing about the music that had just played.

A small smile formed on her lips. She might not understand Jax completely, but she knew that his music had touched her, making her feel a little more connected to both the melody and the rabbit who played it.

Conflicted Composer

Chapter Summary

A few weeks after his run-in with Pomni and the piano room, Jax searches for answers. Little does he know that a certain Jester is the one who holds they key.

Chapter Notes

Thanks a bunch for your patience! The piano piece I've been thinking about this time is “Again” from Your Lie in April. I picture Jax as a really contemporary piano player, so a lot of these songs vibe perfectly with that! Enjoy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was another boring night at the circus, the vibrant colors of the tents illuminated against the starry sky.

Inside his messy room, the resident Jacka$$ Rabbit was sprawled on his bed, his gaze fixated on the ceiling above him. He was stewing over the events of the past few weeks.

It had been a little while since that night when Pomni stumbled upon Jax lost in the music of the piano—a moment in which Jax was unsure if he regretted it.

Since that night, she had become more tolerant of his presence and even tried to include him more with the group outside of their adventures, and to be honest, that annoyed the h#!! Out of him.

But Jax didn’t let the situation get him down.

Let’s just say he upped the ante on his pranks, especially on his "special" little music buddy.

He’s been tormenting her with all kinds of antics—whoopee cushions, water buckets, and he even got a new high score on his favorite game—trip the clown, hitting 108 points with 0 Pomni. Her reactions were priceless!

But every day, without a doubt, she still tried to be friendly with him. She would find excuses to talk to him, and even when he sought her out to pull pranks, she didn’t complain anymore! She just nodded her head and said, “Okay?” Arguing with him and playfully tugging on her funny cartoon body to follow him was half the fun!

With every small smile she offered, every playful nudge to include him, Jax felt a mix of annoyance and confusion swirling inside.

What did she want from him? Why couldn't she just leave him be? The more he pondered these questions, the deeper his irritation with himself became.

Jax knew this would happen.

Pomni thought he was a softie now, just like the rest of these losers—his fellow prisoners.

The whole encounter left an odd taste in his mouth. What upset him the most was that someone had seen him vulnerable.

Someone could see past the carefully crafted mask he had built for himself after years of abuse and self-isolation in this hellhole.

It was just easier to cope that way.

Ok, this was just sad and pathetic, even for him: staring at this AI room and moping. NOPE! That's not the Jax that everyone hates!

Now oddly annoyed with himself and feeling a strange tightening in his stomach, Jax decided he needed a breather.

Standing up and stretching his long limbs, kicking away the covers from his unkempt bed, he resolved to head out into the pitch-black circus toward the stage.

As Jax walked down the quiet hallway, his mind wandered back to when he first discovered the room with his grand piano in it. This was just after a month of arriving, and he had been obsessed with exploring every inch of the circus.

For some unknown reason, Jax always found himself by the main stage. He loathed their theme song; it was awful and made him want to bang his head against the wall until he forgot that d*mn music. That Jumble Jungle wasn't music. He remembered that he knew what music was.

That's when he found it—a hidden room tucked away behind some extra stage props. He pushed aside the objects and uncovered the door.

This door needed no key; it felt like it was meant for him to find.

Shaking his head, Jax broke free from his conveniently placed flashback. His feet led him to the door behind the stage. He opened it, and there it was—his piano. Smiling to himself, feeling some of his emotions coming back under control, Jax stepped toward the instrument.

His mind wandered back to Pomni, who had intruded into his reality. Using those thoughts, he began to play. His new song started tense and loud. He rarely slammed the keys, but he was infuriated.

How dare she take away his peace! What did she want?! Why couldn't she leave him alone like everyone else?!

But, why did he allow her to stay?

The keys creaked and began to give under the intense pressure he exerted on them.

Jax stopped playing.

All he could do was tear people down; that was who he was, who he needed to be to remain sane here. That's why Jax, the AI purple rabbit, is—stuck in a hellish circus.

"Yes, it was beautiful."

Jax paused, his hand slightly shaking over the keys. How did she find a way in?

"It's the most realistic piece of music I've heard."

Even if his notes felt reckless, they were real.

"It makes me feel understood; it makes me feel human."

Human, huh? Jax hadn't thought about that in a long time.

How did he let himself become so soft? Even if he felt pathetic, he knew Pomni was right; it was human.

Jax paused as he lifted his fingers. He decided to play a different tune. This time, it started softly; he caressed the keys gently, playing out his confusion towards the odd sorrow he felt at this moment, along with a tiny tune of warmth.

His mind drifted off to a meadow far away from the circus, a breeze blowing by, and a familiar jester was a few feet away from him, listening to the same melody carried by the wind.

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After practicing for about an hour, Jax felt somewhat satisfied with his work for the night. At least he was a little less annoyed than usual.

He decided to step outside for some fresh air.

Leaving the piano room, Jax strolled outside the circus, taking a deep breath of the cool, simulated night air.

Then he heard it.

Was someone humming?

Jax's curiosity peaked, and he decided to head toward the sound.

This oddly felt like déjà vu.

The sounds were coming from outside the circus, and an open tent flap near the back of the stage was fluttering in the digitally created wind.

Jax walked outside, tracing his gloved hand along the outer part of the circus tent. As he strolled, he found the source of the noise, which vaguely sounded like music.

Well, well, well, speak of the devil—or more like a Jester.

Sitting about ten feet away from the open tent flap was none other than the source of his current frustration and fascination.

It was Pomni.

She was sitting on the simulated grass, gazing up at the endless night sky filled with stars, her back against the canvas fabric of the tent.

The sea of stardust illuminated her eyes, while the moon cast a velvety glow on her skin. She appeared serene, her mind drifting far, far away from the hell they had been sent to. Pomni's rustic brown hair flowed softly in the breeze, and the bells on her hat jingled lightly along with the tune she hummed.

The melody sounded familiar, but what caught Jax's attention was how she began adding random words to her humming. It sounded a bit odd to him, but he couldn’t deny that the clown had a lovely voice. Pomni's singing was effortless, smooth, and glossy—truly beautiful.

D*mn—she looked angelic.

For a moment, Jax was breathless.

Shaking out of his brief trance, he decided to playfully scare her to bring her back to reality.

Sneaking up behind her, Jax leaned in close and whispered, "What are you singing, Short Stack?"

"WHA-HAHA?!" Pomni squealed. "JAX? YOU A$$#@!$!!!!"

She nearly fell face-first into the grass, her pinwheel eyes wide and spinning. Her face turned the brightest shade of red Jax had ever seen. It was priceless!

Belly laughing through his tears, Jax replied, "Haha! You should see the look on your face! Red suits you!"

After laughing at an embarrassed Pomni for about five minutes, Jax pretended to wipe away a fake tear. Once he calmed down, he continued speaking to her.

"Wow, not gonna lie, that was great! But anyway, what are you doing out here? Serenading the moon? You know Cain won't like the competition."

Pomni was still flushed; he was pretty sure he could see steam rising off her. He waited until she composed herself.

Stuttering, Pomni replied, "W-wait? NO! I-it's not like that! I—I couldn't sleep, so I wanted to watch the stars! Y-yeah, that's it..."

She was hiding something. It was convenient that he found her right by the hidden stage room. Time for some snooping!

"Oh really? Why are you on this side of the tent house, then? It's pretty out of the way. You weren't perhaps spying on lil' ol' me?" Jax said mockingly, batting his eyelashes.

"W-what! No! I-I wasn't spying! I, uh, just wanted to listen to you play the piano more. It helped me last time. And, uh, I guess I got caught up in the moment..."

Now, THIS was interesting.

Not only did Jax find Pomni by chance, but she had also admitted to sneaking around to hear him play. Now that's a first; normally, no one would be caught dead trying to find him, let alone wanting to spend time with him.

Jax was a bit surprised. He could tell Pomni understood how he felt; her eyes widened at his expression, and her face was still slightly flushed.

At this point, Jax decided to sit right next to Pomni. The action startled her a bit, but she didn't scoot away. She remained nervous but seemed very interested in her hands all of a sudden.

An odd silence fell between them. It wasn't comfortable, but it wasn't unwelcome either.

Jax decided to break the silence.

"Why didn't you just barge in like last time?"

His words had a bit of bite to them; he was still conflicted about that last music session.

"I-I didn't want to interrupt you. That place seems special and, well, yours. I didn't want to take that away."

Did Pomni respect his space? He NEVER got respect from anyone except now, maybe Pomni.

Thump

Jax's digital heart skipped a beat. Now it was his turn to feel flushed. How did this spaz do this to him?!

Pomni spoke up, "I-uh, really loved that song you played last time; I thought I'd try my hand at recreating it. It's nothing like your music, but—uh—yeah."

Jax stared at Pomni, his expression unreadable. He swallowed hard, feeling a lump in his throat.

"Sing it again."

"Huh?" Pomni looked at him, shocked and confused.

Jax replied in a flat tone, still not looking at her. "Look, if ya want to recreate it, I'll give ya some pointers. So go on, sing it again."

Pomni stared at him with a blank expression, and then suddenly, her large eyes lit up, and she gave him a tiny smile.

The two sat in comfortable silence as Pomni worked up the nerve to try the song again.

Jax leaned back on his hands, and as Pomni began to sing his fingers brushed against hers, causing her to falter slightly. But she didn't pull away.

As she sang, Jax started to whistle along, and they continued their little jam session late into the night, their hands laced together in unison as they played their private symphony.

Perhaps Jax could get used to playing a duet more often.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for the kind words and feedback on the first chapter! Your support truly inspires me to keep writing this mini series. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I loved creating it! Stay tuned for the last chapter coming soon!

Our Symphony

Chapter Summary

After Pomni and Jax's previous encounters, it seemed rather lucky that their next adventure was a music contest.

And they were randomly paired together?

What are the odds?!

Chapter Notes

The song I imagined playing is "Orange" again from Your Lie in April. The lyrics are based on the English translation of the song by AmiLee.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ok, now THIS was a predicament Pomni didn't see coming.

Today's adventure was a music competition. Really? And she was randomly paired with Jax?!

Pomni, trying to calm her racing heart, took a deep breath and peeked her head out of the curtain, looking across the crowd. It was filled with thousands of wooden mannequin players, as well as her other friends from the circus. It seemed as if the stage was growing smaller and smaller.

She couldn’t believe she still got stage fright at 25 years old!

Thinking back to that morning, she remembered how everyone reacted to Cain's new genius idea for the day's activity.

The rules were simple. Each pair would create a song and the accompanying music in three hours. Whoever received a standing ovation from the crowd would win.

Cain randomly chose pairings out of a hat: Ragatha and Kinger, Zooble and Gangle, and then lastly Pomni and Jax.

The other players were surprised by Pomni's reaction when she was assigned her pairing for the challenge, especially Ragatha.

Ragatha suggested, "Now, Pomni, if you want, you can join me and Kinger; we could become a band of three!"

Pomni was flattered that Ragatha offered to help her, but to be honest, she liked being paired with Jax.

She understood Ragatha's concern; who in the world would want to partner with THE resident jack@$$?!

To those outside of Jax and Pomni's private bubble, it seemed odd. But for once, Pomni felt she could trust Jax with this challenge. She had witnessed his talent before.

She replied to Ragatha, "No, it's fine. I have a feeling this will be a fun challenge for once."

Ragatha was taken aback by Pomni's response but decided not to push it.

"Well, if you insist, good luck to you."

Ragatha paused and looked at Jax with narrowed eyes filled with distrust.

"You're going to need it."

———

Pomni felt as if she was going to pass out. The crowd might be fake, but it still looked like a packed football stadium!

She was just starting to hyperventilate when Jax approached her, snapping his fingers in her face.

"Yo, earth to Pomni. Snap out of it; we go on in five," Jax said with flat annoyance.

"H-huh? What the—aren't you even a little nervous?!"

Smirking, Jax curtly replied, "Nope."

Glaring at him, Pomni stated, "You know that somehow doesn’t make me feel any better."

"It's not supposed to," Jax spat back.

Now properly annoyed with her music partner, she yelled, "Well, we only had three hours! You know I can't sing without a script! I just finished the lyrics twenty minutes ago! You didn't even let me practice with you!"

Jax found it amusing to see Pomni so worked up. It was... entertaining.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, geez kid, you have such a short fuse."

Letting out a sigh, Jax continued, "Relax; you're going to be fine. I mean, at least the crowd will remember me playing."

"Besides, we can't be worse than the six-minute rock ballad that Ribbons and Zooble tried to play," Jax said, making quotation fingers when he said the word "play."

"Don't be too hard on them! I thought it was... uh, interesting?"

The pair's performance was more of an interpretive dance number to Zooble playing the electric guitar. It was quite something to watch on stage.

But at least Pomni thought Ragatha's and Kinger's operatic duet, with Kinger playing the lute, was pretty good, even if it all sounded like random words to the tune.

Pomni just rolled her eyes at Jax's snide remark and continued to look over the lyrics in her hands.

After a moment of silence between the two, Cain appeared in front of them.

"Hello, my musical milkmaids! It's showtime! Make your way to the grand stage to give us the finale ballad. I have faith that you'll both be as adequate as the rest, now go!"

Cain was gone as soon as he came.

Jax broke the silence. "Well, let’s get this over with."

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The pair proceeded to walk onto the main stage. Jax seated himself next to the grand piano, and Pomni stood a few feet in front of him next to the microphone.

Pomni felt her heartbeat in her ears as she clutched the mic for dear life.

Rolling his eyes, Jax caught Pomni's attention during her freak-out session. He motioned for her to take a deep breath.

Thankful for his help, she took a deep breath as the red curtain opened to reveal the awaiting crowd and the rest of the circus members.

Swallowing hard, Pomni looked back at Jax and gave him a single nod, ready to start.

He returned the nod and began to play a simple melody.

Pomni opened her mouth and started to sing:

"Even though all the fears,
I like to close my eyes and hear.

The tune that you play has something to say.

I know how I feel, even if this world isn't real."

Jax wasn't fully listening to what Pomni was saying at first. His mind was clouded with feelings of annoyance and an overwhelming sense of dread.

He didn’t want anyone to know about his hobby of playing piano, especially since he was being forced to perform by Cain. That stupid AI didn’t even understand what music is. How could he possibly judge this competition?

"Whatever," Jax thought, a smirk creeping onto his face.

"I’ll just mess up the whole thing so we can get booed off the stage. The quicker it ends, the sooner I can rid myself of this embarrassment, and no one will suspect a thing."

As he approached the piano, a wave of anxiety washed over him, but he pushed it down, determined to sabotage the performance.

He began to play, but as he fumbled through the introductory notes, the once beautiful melody transformed into a chaotic mess of jarring sounds. The high-pitched clashing of razor-sharp notes sounded like cats being crushed.

The sudden shift caught Pomni off guard, causing her to stumble over her lines. Her frustration was visible as she shot Jax a furious glare, eyebrows furrowed, and cheeks flushed.

"What the &@!&!" Pomni thought while glaring at Jax.

Jax, still wearing his trademark grin, widened his smile even more and couldn’t help but stifle a laugh at her reaction.

"That's it!" Pomni exclamied in her mind.

Pomni was fed up with Jax’s dismissive attitude. She understood why Jax didn’t care about this adventure and seemed intent on being seen as a talentless hack, but deep down, she knew he was too good. His talent shouldn't go to waste.

After investing so much time and effort into writing her lines, she refused to let him back out now.

Yes, they might be trapped in a simulation, but that didn’t mean they had to surrender to it!

With a renewed sense of determination coursing through her, Pomni took a deep breath to steady herself, ready to channel her energy into the performance.

She gazed at Jax, willing him to see the potential in himself as she began to sing with heartfelt emotion:

"Even now, it's becoming clear
And this music is the voice I hear.

When we stayed up all night under the moonlight, wide awake it was such a sight"

Now that line caught Jax's attention. His fingers fumbled the keys more than before, and he just stopped playing, transfixed on Pomni. He decided that she needed to go a cappella for a bit.

"Even if all these days seem like we can never change,

We're still the same, but clean again, like right after the rain.

But I know it will be okay, even if things feel boring or gray."

Was this how she felt? When they spent time together, was it refreshing? Was it a nice change in this ever-singular world? Would they be okay?

Yes.

That was all it took. Jax figured that Pomni shouldn't be the only one hogging the spotlight. That was his job.

"Because at least we are here all together through this frey..."

Before he could talk himself out of it, Jax joined in with enthusiasm, picking up right where he needed to be.

"Though the seasons go and sunshine turns to snow..."

The sudden noise startled Pomni. Was Jax playing? He was! Pomni turned her head away from the crowd and gave Jax the brightest smile she could muster.

"That's more like it!" She thought.

Jax caught a glimpse of Pomni's face. Her smile was like the sun, with stars gleaming in her eyes.

"Dazzling," Jax thought.

He returned her smile, widening his Cheshire grin. This time, he allowed her to see him like this, but only for today.

With her eyes twinkling and her heart on fire, Pomni sang out,

"We still have hope and each other to cope.

Through this world of thick and thin, we know where we've been.

We'll always have tomorrow coming in."

Now, Jax would hate to admit it, but this song was inspirational. He felt himself wear a real smile, different from the casual grin he usually plastered on his face. With his heart beating faster, he let the song urge him to fully join in.

With a flick of his wrist and straightening confidently to his full height, Jax braced himself on the piano bench.

His slim fingers gently corrected the piano keys masterfully; he added his spin to the simple melody sample he had played for Pomni during practice.

And he played. He played it all—every thought, every frustration, every emotion he had kept bottled up.

As soon as Jax started to play the piano, it felt like time had slowed down for Pomni.

She heard him. The real Jax. Her eyes were transfixed on his figure. He played with such energy and passion that it echoed in the room.

Pomni caught a small glimpse of the others in the crowd. They were gobsmacked by his performance.

Then she saw it—a real, genuine smile from Jax, and he opened up his world to her.

It was only them—Pomni and Jax.

Nothing else mattered.

Their eyes met; Jax was telling her to

"Show them who you are."

With an arrow striking through her heart, she took a deep breath, ready for the finale. Confidently, she thought to herself, "This is for you."

"Even though years can pass, we'll look up into the sky,

That brilliant blue that one day we'll say goodbye.

Feelings of hope always stay,

Even when things do not change, we together stay the same.

We'll always have tomorrow up ahead."

Jax slowed down his piano playing into a softer outro. For the first time in a long time, he felt free, alive, and human.

He didn't understand how, but Pomni had broken down the rest of his walls.

Eyeing her, he smirked to himself, "You're full of surprise, aren't you, short stack?"

Pomni could feel the air on the stage change.

Jax heard her, and in turn, she heard him.

Pomni found herself in a similar situation to when she first heard Jax play the piano—her eyes filled with soft tears, and her heart swelled with adoration and something more for her companion.

Using that energy, she softly whispered the final line,

"We'll always have tomorrow up ahead."

Jax felt something wet on his face. Was that a tear? Jax doesn't cry. He was just sweating through his eyes. The performance took a lot out of him.

Jax faded out the rest of the notes to the song. Their duet was over.

And it was met with silence.

Lifting his fingers off the piano keys, he walked toward Pomni on the stage. He could tell they both felt something after playing such a masterpiece.

Pomni looked up at Jax, her beautiful eyes mirrored with tears. He leaned down toward her. Pomni could feel her heart beat out of her chest.

"What is he doing?" Her face turned a bright shade of pink.

Giving her a gentle smile, he whispered to her, "Idiot."

Bashfully, Jax used his hand to gently wipe a tear away. He let his fingers linger on her soft cheeks; his eyes flickered over to her lips for a second, but he turned away before his thoughts ran wild.

Pomni tried to stutter out a reply, "J-Jax..?"

Suddenly, the stage erupted with euphoria.

Cheers and applause filled the air throughout the whole circus. Looking stunned, both Pomni and Jax snapped out of their trance.

A standing ovation

Straightening his posture, Jax took Pomni's hand in his own.

Flustered, Pomni whispered, "What are you doing?"

"Just follow my lead."

He intertwined their fingers and bowed, basking in the crowd's praise.

Pomni glanced at their clasped hands and offered a beaming smile. Giving him a gentle squeeze, Pomni bowed to the audience as they showered the stage with hundreds of roses.

As the red curtain fell, it marked the end of their life-changing performance.

And Pomni and Jax wouldn't have it any other way.

Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone!

I appreciate all your patience and wonderful comments! This space means a lot to me! This chapter required a lot of thought, so the fourth and final chapter might take me a little while. Thank you all so much for sticking around and reading! Sending you lots of love! Xoxo

Everything I've ever wanted

Chapter Summary

After their life-changing performance, Pomni wants to talk with Jax. Let's hope that Jax will agree.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The curtain closed on the duo, and the cheers of the animated crowd began to die down.

Lifting her head, Pomni glanced at her intertwined hand with Jax. She looked up, unable to fully meet his gaze, her heart pounding in her ears.

Suddenly feeling flustered, she let go and started to stutter, unsure of how to respond to their performance.

"Uh—Wow, that was, uh... yeah..."

When Pomni released his hand, Jax felt empty again. He stared at Pomni, unable to respond to what they had just shared.

He, too, was at a loss for words.

Bending down, Jax gently picked up one of the dozens of roses thrown onto the stage. He looked down at Pomni, who was cutely charming in her flustered state.

Smirking, Jax felt his mouth go dry, and swallowing hard, he gingerly took Pomni's hand again, holding it gently as if it were made of glass. Surprised by this action, Pomni looked into his eyes.

With a blush on her face, her wide, sparkling eyes felt like looking into an infinite ocean. Jax felt fulfilled; he saw a purpose that extended far beyond the digital circus.

After gazing into each other's eyes for a few moments, Jax built up the courage to speak.

Holding the rose, he gently tucked it behind her ear, where it would rest softly, and began to speak.

"Pomni—"

“Well, well, well! That was fantastic, my dynamic duo!”

Seemingly appearing out of nowhere, Cain poofed in between them, causing Jax to let go of Pomni's hand. Both were startled by the sudden appearance of their ringmaster.

Jax and Pomni backed away from each other, leaving both parties feeling pissed off and a bit embarrassed.

Jax snapped out of his moment with Pomni and yelled angrily at Cain,

“Dude, what the heck? We were in the middle of something!”

Pomni, who had also returned to reality, felt a bit peeved but managed to stay in a good mood after witnessing Jax chew out the AI. She could practically see the smoke coming from his ears!

Giggling to herself about the situation, Jax glanced over to see why she was amused. After catching her beaming smile, he felt himself calm down a bit.

Pomni opened her mouth to interrupt Jax’s threats of violence when she heard,

“Pomni, that was amazing!” shouted Ragatha, who was running toward her on stage, accompanied by the other circus members.

“How did you learn to sing like that? Let alone write it?” Ragatha asked, slightly out of breath from running.

Gangle eagerly chimed in, “Yeah, that was incredible! It was just like a music anime I watched years ago!”

“Yeah, who knew you had that in you?” Zooble added casually.

The circus members excitedly surrounded Pomni, asking questions and giving compliments.

Pomni suddenly became flustered and overwhelmed by all the attention but tried her best to respond politely to her fellow members.

While being bombarded with praise, Pomni looked over at Jax, whose mood had noticeably soured. He was trying not to pay attention to the barrage of admiration directed at her. He wasn’t jealous, per se, but he was undeniably annoyed by the whole ordeal.

As Jax stewed in his self-pity, Kinger sauntered up to him, placing a floating hand on his shoulder.

“That was some great music! It reminded me of butterflies flying in a meadow! Or at least I think it was a meadow…”

Sighing and too drained to make a proper snarky comment, Jax replied,

“Thanks, Kinger…”

Kinger's eyes began to gloss over, seemingly recalling a time long since past.

“You know, that song reminds me of my younger years. I remember when I first tried to tell Queenie how I felt about her. If only I could play piano!”

Taken aback by the old chess piece's sudden lucidity, Jax responded,

“W-wait, what did you—”

“Oh, look! An ant trail!”

Kinger screeched in excitement, removing his hand from Jax’s shoulder and moving to the corner of the stage, trying to find where the ant trail started, leaving a puff of wind behind.

Left alone again, all Jax could say was,

“Huh.”

Cain loudly interrupted the players’ gleeful chatter, announcing,

“Huh indeed, my piano prodigy and singing angel! You two won today’s musical challenge!” Confetti began to rain down around them, and trumpets played.

“As your reward, you each get a lovely bouquet of roses from your adoring fans!”

With a snap of his fingers, both Pomni and Jax found themselves holding beautiful roses, suddenly thrust back into the circus, where the stage and their duet seemed to vanish into thin air.

———

After the adventure ended, Pomni found herself back in her room, unable to fall asleep. This time, instead of thinking about her impending doom, her mind wandered to a certain purple rabbit.

Lying in her bed and staring up at the blue-striped ceiling, she absentmindedly flicked the rose that Jax had given her, which was still tucked in her hair.

She had forgotten to remove it before going to bed.

Sighing to herself, Pomni thought back on the day’s events. So much had happened in just a few hours. Not only had she sung her heart out, healthily releasing some of her frustrations, but she had also shared that moment with Jax of all people.

Removing the rose from her hair, Pomni examined it closely. Her eyes softened as she held it.

The bouquet given to her by Cain contained pink roses, which she didn’t dislike, but this flower had soft red velvet petals and smelled more like a real rose than the others.

As she looked at the rose, Pomni felt her face grow warm at the memory of that moment between them. Jax's face had been so close, and Pomni could see his eyes—there was no malice in them. He looked at her as if he could finally see her clearly. When he brushed his fingers against her cheek, she had to fight the urge to lean into his hand. He spoke softly, his voice as gentle as his lips appeared.

W-Wait, what?!

Blushing fiercely and with her heart racing, Pomni sat straight up in her bed, beads of sweat forming on her forehead.

What in the world was she thinking?!

Feeling incredibly embarrassed by her runaway thoughts, Pomni put her head on her knees, her eyes shut tight.

Bad Pomni, bad! It's not like that!

.....Is it?

Anxiously, Pomni began to search her mind for answers. Then she remembered something important from their conversation.

Jax had been trying to tell her something.

Now that she thought about it, what was he going to say?

Thinking back to when they had reappeared in the circus from the stage, Pomni had wanted to catch Jax to ask him about what he had been trying to say earlier, but feeling shaken and experiencing motion sickness from the transportation, she had thrown up.

After that, Ragatha had been patting her on the back, and by the time she looked up, Jax had quickly retreated to his room.

She figured he wanted to avoid questions from the other circus members about the performance, and she wanted to respect his privacy.

But she wished she could clarify a few things.

Sitting straight up in her bed, Pomni took deep breaths to calm her pounding heart. While fixing her hat, she made up her mind. It might be the middle of the night, but she wanted—no, needed—to speak with Jax.

If the others hadn't interrupted, what would have happened between them after the performance?

There had to be more to it, right?

As Pomni's mind began to swirl with similar questions, she started to feel anxious.

What if Jax just wanted to forget about it all?

To be honest, Pomni did not want that to happen.

“Okay, I’m getting up!” she thought to herself.

With newfound determination, Pomni went to find her trusty glow sticks in the corner of her room.

With her glow stick necklace and rose tucked in place, she was ready to confront Jax.

And she knew exactly where to find him.

_____

No matter how hard he tried to fight the urge, Jax always found himself back in this room.

He stared at the doorknob in front of him. Taking a deep breath, he reached out to grab it. Slowly turning it, the door made a small click, creaking open to reveal the one thing illuminated in the whole room.

His piano.

As Jax silently walked toward the instrument, the floorboards creaked under his feet, and the dust in the room danced in the small rays of light. They almost looked like stars, similar to the ones he and Pomni had viewed together that night.

Jax stopped walking and stood idly by the piano bench.

Pomni.

That performance, that song.

It was...

Jax lost his train of thought. What had just happened between them?

He had always been afraid this would happen. As soon as someone got too close, he wanted to run.

She saw him. The real him. No one had seen that side of him in years. Even before the circus, he wore a mask of aloofness.

What confused Jax even more was that he let this happen. Why?

All he wanted to do was run and forget everything: Pomni figuring out his secret, their music sessions, their soul-stirring performance, the rose he gave her...

The rose.

What was he going to tell her? He didn't even know. It was all just a result of his emotions starting to get the better of him.

Now feeling newly frustrated, Jax sat on the piano bench, clenching his hands in his lap.

This is all so stupid! He shouldn't be feeling anything! He was a cold-hearted bastard—nothing more, nothing less.

Tired of feeling so pent-up, he opened the piano lid and started to play.

At first, the notes cane guard and dast, the piano keys creaking under his finger. A swirl of emotions erupted out of him as the notes became more violent and shared like a thunderstorm.

These emotions were useless! Why was he so emotional?

His mind wandered back to their performance.

Pomni....she showed him her world. That voice that song, it was finally becoming clear. She was everything he ever wanted.

The realization shocked Jax in silence. He banged his fingers on the piano. The monstrous sound echoed through the empty room.

His eyes widened in shock at his thoughts. Swear to drip down his forehead. Sighing Jax thought to himself

F#@$...

Resting his elbows on the piano keys, he put his head in his hands.

What in the world was he thinking, there's no way that he could ever have her.

He has done too much; he's too far gone.

But, thinking back on the time they spent together when she stayed to hear him play when Pomni saught him out under the stars, the sing they played together in front of the entire circus.

Was it too late? Jax didn't know.

Taking these thoughts to heart, Jax lifted his arms off the piano. He straightened his back cracked his fingers, and started to play a different tune.

This time it was soft, calming after all the rage from a storm the sun was finally shining through. He closed his eyes as he played. The music danced around him as the notes met the still air.

Jax saw a green meadow far away from the circus, a cool breeze through his fur, a blurred sky alight like Safire. And by him was an ever-smiling angel. Her hair fluttered in the breeze free of her Jester hat. White dress flowing in the wind. She was calling him.

"Jax?"

He ceased his playing. She always knew where to find him, didn't she?

———

When Pomni entered the room, the beautiful melody that Jax was playing suddenly stopped, almost as if it were right on cue for her arrival.

Silently, Jax lifted his fingers off the piano keys and turned to face Pomni.

Caught off guard by his sudden gaze, Pomni flinched. But she knew why she had come; she was determined to get her answers.

Straightening her posture, she slowly walked toward Jax, mustering as much confidence as she could.

Now only inches apart, Jax stared at her, glancing partly to the side.

He lifted his hand toward her, and Pomni stood still, her face flushing as images of their previous conversation flashed through her mind.

Smirking, Jax said, “Idiot,” and plucked the rose from her hair, resting it on the hood of the piano.

Pomni let out the breath she hadn’t realized she was holding. She replied,

“What the hell was that? You gave me a scare!”

With a soft laugh, Jax said,

“Relax, Pommers. I was just curious. Besides, I was wondering when you would find me.”

That comment made Pomni blush. He had been waiting for her? At least she knew they both needed to talk about something.

“J-Jax, I, uh, wanted to talk to you…”

“About what?”

“A-about us…”

That comment surprised him; Jax's eyes widened slightly at her words. Her voice was sincere, and she looked nervous.

Trying to maintain his poker face, Jax replied,

"I don't get what you're getting at…"

"Yes, you do. I know you do, or else you wouldn't have said you've been waiting for me."

Oh, sh#@, he did say that, didn't he?

Pomni noticed Jax starting to shy away from the conversation, but she wasn't going to let him back out. Gathering her courage, she continued,

"Back when we finished playing that piece together, you were going to tell me something. What was it?"

Ah, so that's what she wants, Jax thought to himself.

Feeling his digital heart start to beat faster, he realized he didn't even know what he wanted to say, so he decided to do what he did best: run away.

"It was nothing, kid. Just forget about it. I gotta go to my room anyway."

Standing up from the piano bench, Jax closed the lid and began to walk toward the door. But something caught onto his pant leg.

Pomni was silent, her head down, her hand shaking as she grabbed onto Jax almost desperately.

"So you just want to forget everything?"

There was a hint of venom in her voice.

"Let go, Pomni."

Pomni was fed up with his aloofness; she knew Jax too well, and he wouldn't get away from this. Raising her voice and looking Jax in the eye, she said,

"You're just going to turn your back on this with your tail between your legs?! After all we did together, after all the emotion I let you see, you're just going to run away?!"

Pomni's tone struck a nerve in Jax. How dare she judge him!

"Pomni, shut it before this gets real ugly!"

Yelling back, she retorted,

"What do you mean, get ugly? It's already ugly! I know you have a heart under all that attitude you lug around. And I, for one, am sick of it! What are you afraid of?!"

Jax saw red and yelled back,

“Now listen here, Chuckles, I have been roting here for years! I had everything planned to keep everyone away, including you!”

His final words echoed in the piano room. Pomni went silent, and Jax almost felt remorse for how harshly he had berated her.

Pomni's voice was soft as she barely whispered,

“You want to be alone? Well, fine, be alone.”

Pomni finally let go of Jax’s pant leg, her whole body shaking. Tears began to form in her eyes as she slowly started to walk toward the door, hugging herself.

○○○

Time slowed down for Jax. He was shell-shocked by her words. He deserved this, didn’t he? Everything he had ever wanted was finally walking away.

She was everything: his first music buddy, the first person to see through his façade.

Pomni heard him and wanted to answer, but without thinking, Jax grabbed onto Pomni’s hand as she brushed by him to walk away.

She froze.

They stood at a standstill.

After what felt like an eternity, Jax stammered,

“I—I don’t want to forget.”

Pomni’s eyes opened wide, full of tears as she turned toward Jax, whispering,

“W-what?”

Unable to meet Pomni’s gaze, Jax whispered,

“I—what I wanted to tell you was thanks.”

Pomni was now wide awake. Jax saying “thank you” was the last thing she thought she would ever hear. She squeezed his palm as permission to continue talking.

Now looking Pomni in the eyes, Jax was ready to speak.

“Your song was good, and your voice was perfect. We sounded great together. And I wanted to ask... if we could do it again sometime?”

Jax’s face was fully red, and Pomni had to admit it looked adorable on him. The tears she had been holding back finally flowed freely as she gave Jax a beaming smile.

Unable to hold herself back anymore, Pomni yanked Jax down to her height, placing both her hands on his face, leaning in to give him a chaste kiss on the cheek.

Jax, surprised by the sudden action, stared at Pomni as she let go.

Pomni, shyly looking away, spoke up.

“And FYI, that means yes, I would love to.”

Touching the cheek that she kissed, Jax smirked.

"Hey short stuff, I think you missed a spot"

Looking confused Pomni replied,

"What do you me-"

Suddenly His lips on hers were soft and gentle; warmth blossomed into Pomnis's heart as Jax angled his mouth to deepen the kiss. Pomni slowly let her body go limp and started to lean into the kiss.

Parting lips, Jax and Pomni looked into each other eyes and hugged in a tender embrace.

They didn't know what the future held for them, but at least they could perform this new digital melody together.

Chapter End Notes

Happy New Year, everyone! 🎉

I’m so excited to kick off the year by finally wrapping up this mini-series! Thank you all for your amazing love and support throughout this journey—it truly means the world to me! I’d love to hear your thoughts, so feel free to share them below. Wishing you all a fantastic New Year filled with joy! Stay tuned for more fics coming your way soon!
Love you all! 💖

End Notes

I’d love to hear your comments and suggestions! This is my first fanfic, and I’m excited to improve. I plan to turn this mini-story into a series of three, though I’m not sure how long it will take to write. More will be coming eventually! Thank you so much for reading!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!